

**COLLEGE CONNECTIONS: BUILDING A POSTSECONDARY
CONTINUUM**

A Regional S/C/W I Regional Forum

Durham College and the Durham District School Board

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BACKGROUND

On Friday, November 14, 2003, Durham College and the Durham DSB held a regional forum attended by 63 Grade 11 and 12 College English teachers, and 10 Durham College Communications professors. The date was chosen because it was a scheduled Professional Activity day for the Board; as a result, no release time was required. The day was jointly planned by the school board and the college and was funded by the School/College/Work Initiative. Committee members from Durham College included Jackie Bathe, Fran Clarke, and Martha Finnigan, Communications professors, and Kathy Rhodes, Curriculum Liaison Specialist; the Durham DSB was represented by Fred Miller, English Facilitator. Fred contacted all the high schools, arranged for the English teachers to attend, and organized the registration. All but two high schools sent representatives.

Objectives of the Day:

In planning the day, the organizers wanted participants to be able to:

- Look at where students are coming from (college) and where they are going (secondary)
- Create a dialogue and a sense of community
- Exchange best practices and strategies

Format of the Day:

Following registration, refreshments, and welcome, a panel of first-year students addressed the audience about their experience in making the transition from high school to college.

The panellists were asked to focus on three areas:

- The strengths they brought with them from high school
- The specific challenges they faced in making the transition
- Any words of advice they might have for high school students considering attending college.

The panel was very well received with several teachers inviting the group to their own schools to speak directly with students. We are working with our Admissions Liaison team to facilitate this and to ensure that the students involved have the appropriate support and training before going out to the high schools.

The participants then broke into groups of approximately 8-10 to discuss:

- Curriculum and content of college courses including teaching strategies
- Assessment and evaluation strategies
- Overall college expectations.

Each group was led by a representative from the college and significant resources were shared within the groups.

After a lunch break, a presentation was made regarding the Ontario College Writing Exemplars.

As participants completed their evaluation forms, a draw was held for door prizes. We had contacted our publishers, many of whom were very generous in providing sample copies of college-level Communications textbooks, and the majority of participants left with a book, gift certificate, or glow pen. At the beginning of the day, participants were presented with a bag containing information about Durham College programs as well as a glow pen.

FEEDBACK

Participants were asked to rate the quality and content of the speakers and breakout sessions and the quality of the location and food/refreshments. In addition, several anecdotal questions were asked. Three respondents indicated that they wished to apply for a PLP credit for this session.

Following is a summary of the responses. Complete details are included in the Appendix.

	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Format (30)		3%	20%	77%
Content				
Student Panel (37)			16	84
Breakout #1 (37)		11	35	54
Breakout #2 (37)	3	11	46	41
Breakout #3 (36)	0	19	44	36
OCWE (20)	5	5	40	50
Quality				
Student Panel (36)			19	81
Breakout #1 (36)		6	42	53
Breakout #2 (36)		11	42	47
Breakout #3 (36)		14	47	39
OCWE (21)	5	10	38	48
Location (35)	3	11	20	66
Food/refreshments (36)	0	3	14	83

Total number of respondents = 37

Number in brackets () = number of respondents for that question

Anecdotal responses were overwhelmingly positive as were comments received from participants immediately after the event. We continue to receive positive feedback from the community. Complete anecdotal responses by question are included in the appendix.

APPENDIX

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS – BUILDING A POST-SECONDARY CONTINUUM

Extract of Evaluation Comments

Q1: What's one thing you've learned today that could be implemented at your school?

There were several suggestions regarding the need for better research skills and a shift away from literary essays towards research essays.
What I'm doing now is dead on target! It's very good to have reinforcement!
Evaluation and a greater need for Report Writing Review
Corroboration of some of our existing policies and strategies was excellent.
More use of grammar, sentence structure and report writing
What type of writing assignments I need to focus on. The emphasis on personal accountability of students
Zeros for late assignments
I will likely begin using presentations more as an assignment type, despite knowing that I will encounter student resistance
More report writing. More presentations. Use of the MLA more stringently.
I did not know that oral presentations are emphasized at college. In my classes I will continue to work on their oral presentation skills in order to help prepare my students
Exemplars – something to aim for
Proofreading and report writing need to be stressed
More practical, research/report writing
Continue to stress presentations. Stress report writing
More focus on technical writing
More business technical writing activities (even just memos..). More group work (structured) to create a project/product.
When students ask for an extension for an assignment due date, ask them to submit their 'work in progress'.
I intend on using handouts received today in my Grade 12 program – Research Paper Plan and Checklist. This is extremely helpful because we are presently doing a research essay. These documents add authenticity.
Emphasize citation methods for college level students
More opportunity to do notes during class
Encourage more students to take high school business English courses. Emphasize research reports in 3C/4C (several repeats – culminating activity)

Q2: How will you use today's information with your students immediately?

Emphasize research issues and citing skills
I will inform them of the accuracy of our expectations
To inform them of some college expectations
I will reiterate the importance of developing good skills in written and oral communication
I will report to them re: student panel
Reinforce the importance of grammar
More structured writing than essay writing
Designing units, assignments
Tell them that what I am teaching them in grammar will be evaluated at college
Share expectations and examples. Incorporate more non-fiction into course
I have a lesson planned which will lend itself to having students present information they discover through internet research
I will use the sample course outlines, assignments, and information in order to clarify and emphasize the college expectations. I will also incorporate some of the information into my future assignments
Share passing mark at 60%
Discuss some of the things I learned with them
On Monday, I am going to share the information with them and continue to emphasize today's information throughout the semester
General feedback what to expect during college. Essay rubric – modify mine to be closer. Expose students to different types of writing, i.e. memos – short reports – research essays
Will discuss on Monday. Use information and notes to foster the NEED TO SUCCEED
Apply the curriculum to report writing. More focus on grammar
Develop paragraph strategy
Presentation skills
Reports, media, computer presentations
Speak to them about what I learned, emphasize certain points
Share with the students (first year) what I heard about the difficulties in transitioning from h.s. to college [college professor]
I will share the methods of evaluation, the expectations and goals with my students and the other teachers in our English Department.
Giving them information on time management and plagiarism

Reiterate importance of time management and use of agenda
More emphasis on research reports, presentation skills, and group work skills
We have an oral presentation scheduled for Monday. I'll tell them about what the students said today about their experiences
Show them the material to understand the expectations of college – it is also good for analysis
Course outlines could imitate college outline, perhaps. H.S. college courses are already skill-based, however. We need to continue to teach the students we have, but we can make ideal expectations more explicit to them.

Q3: What partnerships or ongoing contacts do you see that would be valuable for you and/or your students?

I took contact information for a communications teacher at Durham that could be useful, as well as possible contact with the Academic Skills Centre
Partnerships already formed between Durham College staff and DDSB staff must be maintained and strengthened
To have visiting college students and advisors in the classroom
I will be contacting Joanne Prout to look at having her come to my school to speak with gr. 12 students about communication skills. It would be great if she could bring a student or two with her.
Student panel, other teachers
Research college practices. Guest speakers
Having your students speak to my students about their college experience
College students speaking with high school students
I would like to have the opportunities to meet with college professors who teach communications to discover more specifically what skills, attitudes they would like to have students arrive at college with
The 4-panel student ensemble have agreed to come speak at our high school
Actual visits to the classroom – 'sit-ins' during a 'normal day'
Increased college prep sessions to help students realize what they must do – will be expected to do
Student visits to talk to grades 10, 11, and 12. Professor visits to also talk to grades 10, 11, and 12. Small groups of high school students could spend a day on campus attending classes, etc.
I would feel comfortable contacting profs at the post-secondary level in future – as a result of today – should I have questions or concerns about how well I am preparing my students
I would love to be able to get some college students to come to my high school

and talk to my classes about realistic expectations for their transition to college
More feedback from college & university as to the success/failures of our students so that we might improve our students' chances of success
Would like more opportunities to continue meetings with college profs
I've got several names and business cards and would like someone to talk to my students
With one professor – exchange of email for future exemplars. This would also be valuable for other staff to examine

Q4: What was most valuable about the day to you?

Reaffirming some of my experiences with 'C' level English and gaining fresh perspectives
Assessment and evaluation practices @ Durham College
Communication with the profs
The chance to meet college instructors and discuss issues was great
Confirmation of need to ensure and that students become independent learners who are responsible for their learning
Hearing from the various professors about the course expectations and from the students about the large amount of group work
Meeting other teachers and exchanging ideas
The most valuable thing about the day was the opportunity to meet and talk to college professors and hear from them what they need and are encountering in their programs
Curriculum content/course outlines & policies. College student feedback
The need to stress/focus on writing skills. Talking to other teachers about their experiences
All valuable – speaking with the actual college teachers; actual assignments and evaluation sheets; what our students will be facing. A view of college texts was also good.
That evaluation (sic) sheet wasn't proofread. [Respondent rewrote the question to: "What was most valuable experience of the day?"]
Team building with department members
Focus on things that can be done in the future
Talking to other teachers about students' weaknesses in terms of college expectations

Learning about the challenges students face in the transition between high school and college
Learning more about the challenges associated with students in their first year of college
Insights from professors
Seeing actual course outlines and assignments from first-year college classes
Confirm my belief that as Gr. 11, 12 College Prep. English teachers the focus on writing needs to be on reports and research essays as opposed to literary essays
Being able to hear student experience and having access to Profs.
Realizing most teachers experience the same issues with students
It was a good reminder about what we should be aiming for in terms of preparing our students for the college level
The achievement charts. The information that most of us were doing the correct things with regards to the preparation